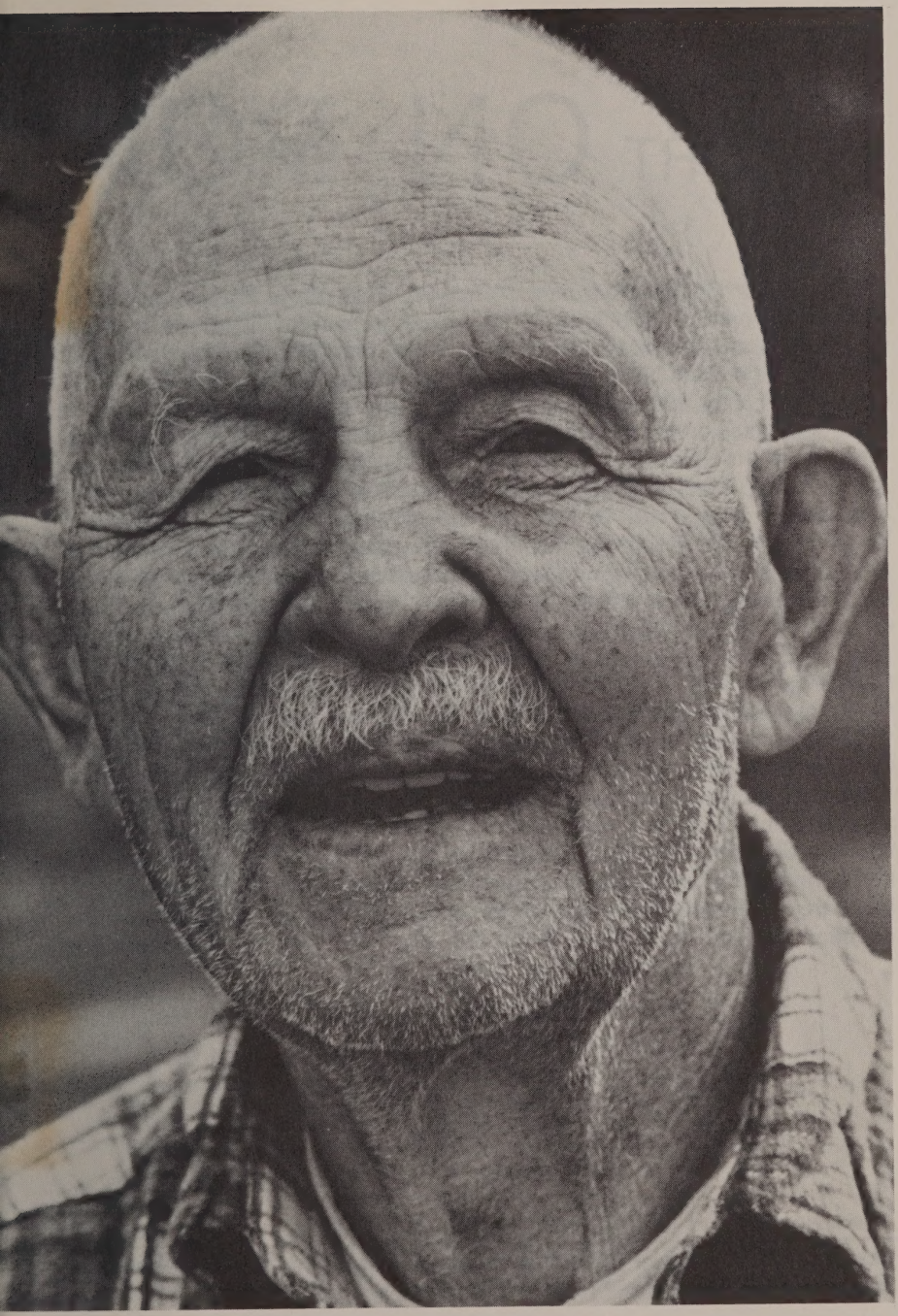
ROVA FARM

July 1981



REPORT ON ROVA

LESS than an hour's drive from the office of Fellowship in Prayer, in the town of Cassville, on the edge of New Jersey's bleakly beautiful Pine Barrens, gleam the gold onion-domes of two Russian Orthodox churches. Smaller domes and triple-barred crosses, also gold, ornament the gravestones of a large cemetery that lies between the church, and in among the surrounding trees, scrubby green and black, stand many white birch trees and many log houses with an oriental slant to their eaves which make you feel you are in Russia—Russia of the beginning of this century. Near the churches, the walls of the restaurant are decorated with portraits of Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevski and busts of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff. In the park stands a huge sculpture of Pushkin again. Just as ubiquitous are the double-framed portraits of Nicholas and Alexandra, the last Tsar and his Tsarina. It is astonishing—the food consists of borscht and stuffed cabbage and other Russian delicacies, the drinks are vodka and pitchers of beer, even the faces are Russian, with broad Slavic cheekbones and Tartar eyes, the styles of dress seem to belong to illustrated editions of *Dead Souls* and *The Brothers Karamazov.*

They are charming people, elaborately courteous, wonderfully good-natured, and remarkably open about themselves, their thoughts and feelings. Interviewing them for this special issue on Rova Farm—which is the name of the community that has existed here in our midst for more than fifty years—was to make friends. Although their community was started as a mutual-aid society for immigrants and is thus ethnic rather than religious, they understood what we were looking for and cooperated in letting us see and share the complex spiritual life at Rova Farm that is guided by the young and ailing

Interviews by Paul Griffith and Bob Waite *Photos by Tom Dunham*

The opinions expressed in this issue are the subjects' and not necessarily those of the editors or of Fellowship in Prayer.

FARM

archpriest of St Vladimir's, the larger of the two Russian Orthodox churches, Father Konstantin Fedoroff. He asked us to lunch, and in the course of this delightful meal—which he himself did not touch, saying that when he spoke of his Lord he felt no physical hunger—he explained to us the strict beliefs of his faith and also related for our benefit many of his own burdensome experiences as the spiritual leader of the community. From others we spoke with—the charming Helen Zill, who sits in her cluttered office and obviously makes the wheels of Rova Farm go around, and the helpful Mr Alexei De Vr'e, who used to tune pianos for Steinway in New York City—we heard many stories of Fr Konstantin's personal charities and loving kindness to his parishioners and indeed everyone, including a pair of hitchhikers to whom he gave his own car so that they could drive to California. Although Fr Konstantin's words to us were dogmatic, they were uttered with such conviction and also such sensitivity to the feelings of outsiders that we felt we were among early Christians.

The newcomers to Rova Farm whom we met—such as Panteleimon Levintov, who gave up his psychiatric practice in Leningrad to begin a new life here, and Carol Devecka, who was healed by God and carried her healing into the community—offered us points of view about Rova Farm which were less unfamiliar.

This report has been planned to accompany last fall's *Report On Holistic Health* as part of Fellowship in Prayer's effort to investigate the great variety of spiritual searches being made these days. We will be sending you others in the future. —P.G.

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HELEN ZILL

The secretary-treasurer of Rova Farm first went there as a child and, as she says, "just continued," settling there with her husband, bearing two sons there, and helping the 10,000 members of the community

We met Helen Zill, secretary-treasurer of Rova Farm, in Rova's office—a room of such clutter and activity that we could not help thinking of similar scenes in Gogol and Dostoevski, the white bark of birch trees outside, not to mention the gold onion-domes of St Vladimir's Church, completing the impression made on us that we had come to a country very different from the U.S. Although born in New York City, Mrs Zill is as Russian-seeming as the community. Having come to it first as a summer camper while still a girl, she knows its history as part of her own life.

Helen: To begin with, how all this came about. When our parents arrived in this country, some prior to the Revolution, others during and after it, there were no welfare programs. If the father of a family couldn't work, the family starved. So some enterprising young men formed clubs throughout the country and Canada, wherever Russian people had settled. That took a lot of effort—a lot of writing, because at the time telephones were costly and not much used. In 1926, in Philadelphia, representatives of these clubs gathered in a convention and formed a welfare organization called the Russian Consolidated Mutual Aid Society of America, the first letters of which in Russian make the word ROVA. It was mostly fathers who belonged. Mothers were busy at home—they didn't have electricity, they didn't have hot water. What the clubs did when the father of a family fell ill and couldn't work was give what they called a "sick benefit" which would provide the family with enough money to survive his illness and inability to work.

By assessing dues—very minute ones—from members, the branches gathered funds that helped everywhere throughout the country. There were many branches in New York City—about 200 or 300 in each—and throughout New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Igor Sikorsky—who made the helicopter—and his wife helped. They were very interested in culture, and formed a school where children were taught the Russian language. That was on Tenth Street in New York.

Sikorsky started an airplane company. He didn't have funds, so he asked people to help him get started. Many did, including my father, who gave a few dollars whenever he could. He wasn't successful with the airplane. It couldn't get off the ground. But when he went over to helicopters, he was successful. He was among several of the men who became prominent in the history of this country.

In 1933, the New York branches found they had a reserve in the insurance funds. They went to the superintendent of insurance and asked if they could get permission to build a place in the country. Most of them lived as immigrants in slum areas of New York, and felt they should have a place in the country where they could bring their children, and also meet members from other branches. Although the superintendent thought it was risky, he finally agreed. So, in 1934, with the help of a Russian real-estate man in Lakewood, New Jersey, Chester Fedor, they found 1,400 acres of wilderness here. We purchased it at ten dollars an acre. An acre now sells for twelve thousand.

Our leaders were very serious people and quite imaginative. They divided the land up, saving part of it for our center, and selling the surrounding land to members or to people of Slavic origin who were interested in settling here. The first thing they built was the restaurant. All the restaurant originally was in this

building *(she waves a hand at the office and the rooms adjoining).* It was really beautiful. They had a miller here, and the lake was like a little river passing through, and he enlarged it into the lake. Our people began to build a community kitchen, with two long rows of gas jets. The place abounded with berries and mushrooms, and the ladies would can them on these little gas jets for the winter. It was just a wonderful community existence. It was mostly outdoor living. All people needed was a room with beds. So the men would come down on their day-off—in those days men worked six days a week—and build primitive shacks along the row here.

So the community was formed. They had a children's camp. The counselors were very gifted ladies who enlisted help from stars in the ballet, the opera, the music world. Since we didn't have heat except, I guess, in this building, it was mostly a summer place. Camp lasted eight weeks, and the children's concert at the end was fabulous—but fabulous. Those who wanted to learn Russian were taught Russian Music. All the talent the children possessed was brought forth—and some went on to become rather famous ballerinas or musicians or the heads of music departments in colleges. Athletic abilities were brought out, too. Non-Russian children were permitted to attend the camp, primarily if the mother was ill or one parent was missing.

It was a family place. At the end of the season, there was a big picnic, dedicated primarily to the children. They had potato-races with old grandmothers. I remember two grandmothers who spent about fifteen years trying to beat each other and winning little vases as prizes. One was a big hulk who was short and the other was tall, and of course mostly the tall one won. We also had fireworks. It was really a very nice existence. What was particularly good was that many of the immigrants who came didn't have a brother or sister in this country, and they sort of formed family relationships here. One would be godfather for a friend's child and vice versa. These relationships helped them through life.

To show you the simplicity with which we lived, Friday night was a very big night because the fathers arrived from the city that night. We'd have an accordionist who was wonderful. We'd have a big campfire by the lake. Everybody would gather. The children, the fathers, the mothers—everybody would sing and dance. It was very simple except in the case of some of the generals from the Tsarist army who came here, some of whom had lived in France for a while and made their own champagne. One general especially would grow special grapes and make champagne and cool it in the well and give everybody a taste. It was just the greatest thing.

FIP: Were you a counselor at the camp?

Helen: No, I was a volunteer—secretary of the youth group. From the time I was nine, my father was very active in the organization. I remember going through snow and sleet to take checks to people who needed them. I guess I was brought up with it and just continued. It was mostly helping people who were in trouble. I don't know whether I helped or interfered.

After my husband returned from service and didn't have a steady job, we lived out here. My two middle sons were born here—my Sasha and Mark were the first two residents born at Rova Farm.

And so our community grew. People began to settle in the area. Some are chicken farmers and some have pigs. We had a tragedy with one man who had little piglets—and we don't know whether he went to feed them and had a heart-attack or what. It was one of those gruesome horrors. An agronomist came and told us how the land should be divided, including where the church should be built.

We couldn't buy the parcel of land where the church is. The lady who owned it said it could never be sold—it could only be donated to a house of worship of any denomination. We owned all the land around it, so we started collecting for the church. It's still not finished. Throughout the years, it has been such a costly thing, and a few things happened to delay it. They put the cornerstone in in 1938.

FIP: There are two churches. Right?

Helen: Yes, the one in the cemetery had the most beautiful Byzantine chapel that existed—it was just exquisite. It was open all the time, and we went in and meditated. When the era of vandalism came, everything had to be shut up. The reason why there are two churches in Rova is that some of the money that was collected to build the new church was sent by a bishop to some starving monks in a monastery in France. Because he didn't consult enough with the people who had gathered the money, a lot of hard feelings developed, and people broke away from the so-called parish church, which is called Saint Mary's, and built the bigger new one which is called Saint Vladimir's. Saint Vladimir's is a so-called Tsarist church. Saint Mary's, which is under the U.S. bishop, is independent. There used to be some rivalry between them, but with the old folks dying, it's beginning to die, too. It's a relief. One would call the other Communist.

FIP: The Tsar and his family are still part of the service at Saint Vladimir's?

Helen: Yes, it's very pretty. As a historic thing, we're lucky to see the beauty.

And , of course, it follows Orthodoxy to have the service exactly as it was in the past, throughout the centuries.

Father Peter Popoff was priest there for twenty-five years—a very quiet, dedicated priest, the kind a priest should be. Our priests marry, you see, and Father Peter had a French wife who wore sort of Frenchy clothes, smoked, and was a little more modern than our mothers. She was very charming. But she died, and he retired. He was succeeded by Father Gorb, who's been with us about seven years. Unfortunately some difficulty arose between him and the parishioners, which is a pity because he wrote three volumes on the life of Cossacks. He comes from a family of Cossacks. He's outspoken like the Cossacks. But he did a lot of good in his own way and after seven years people have come to understand him and like him very much.

Father Konstantin, who is archpriest at Saint Vladimir's, is an artist. The latest icon he made gave us the feeling that God was among us here. It's beautiful, just beautiful. Have you seen the crosses he makes? I'll have to show you. *(She holds up her hand to display a large silver ring.)* I'm wearing the Tsarist crest. Father Konstantin teaches the young people how to work with metals, also how to work with mosaic. The mosaics on Saint Vladimir's church were just put on in the last years. Father Konstantin does so much good. He has communication with young people. Which is wonderful. To reach youth these days is in itself a gift.

FIP: He's a young man?

Helen: He has a beard, so it's difficult to tell, but I would say he's about 38. He's a gifted artist and a wonderful, wonderful person. A while back, somebody gave him a car. Then he met some kids who said they needed a car to go to California. So he gave it to them. If he goes to the bank and meets a lady who can't pay her bills, he gives her his own money on the theory that what he needs he will get from somewhere. And he does. Someone always sends a donation that more than covers the amount. I think he's like an angel of God here among us.

Our organization is actually non-political and non-sectarian, although most of our people are Russian Orthodox. We have other denominations, too—Baptists, Protestants, whatever. During the McCarthy period, which was a very difficult time for Rova, people didn't want to be associated with anything Russian. In some cases, it meant people's jobs. And so the membership in Rova dropped off. On the advice of our superintendent of insurance, we joined up with a similar organization, the Russian Brotherhood organization in Philadelphia. They were a lot more religious than Rova. Their

lodges or branches met mostly in churches, and they opened meetings with prayer and, in most cases, they assisted the churches. At first, we thought theywere fanatics and they thought we were a little bit heathen. But we got to know them and they are fantastic human beings, very lovely, and they found that we, too—well, they seemed to like us, too.

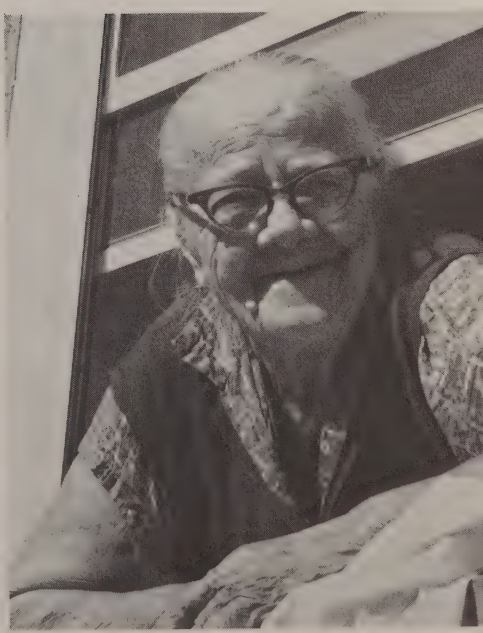
There have been three waves of immigrants who have settled in Rova. First wave: people who suffered from the Revolution. Second wave: those who came after the Second World War. And third wave: those who in the past few years have left the Soviet Union, the so-called "dissidents." It is because of the differences between these groups—the old ones, for instance, don't even speak English—that we have had our schisms and problems. The old folks were, a lot of them, aristocrats. They were very Tsarist and very rigidly against anything that wasn't very old or Tsarist. Some aren't political at all. They feel that what is happening in Russia is Russia's problem and that we in the United States have to be concerned with our existence here. A few years ago, a group from Saint Mary's went to Russia and were amazed to find the churches all crowded and services going on.

So, when a young priest like Father Konstantin comes to Rova, all these people devour him unless he adheres to their own particular rules. It is very, very difficult for him. How could it be otherwise for such a young man, such an ssartist? It has taken its toll on his health, which is not good. The archbishop told him that if these people were nuisances, he ought to get rid of them. But he says he can't do that because they're all old people and he was brought up to respect old people even if they kill you. That's ingrained. And that's part of the religion. So they are doing their utmost to hurt him, and he's forgiving them, which is a great thing.

Opposite page: One of the white birch trees planted at Rova Farm; an icon painted by Father Konstantin; a friendly woman at old folks' home.

On the following two pages: Easter eggs painted in Russian style; a double portrait with flag of Tsar Nicholas and Tsarina Alexandra; and the bust of Russian poet Pushkin below gold onion-dome of Saint Vladimir's. The gift shop at Rova Farm; a mosaic of Saint Vladimir, who was first to bring Christianity to Russia; and a pair of praying hands and gold icon.

AT ROVA FARM



СТЫИКНАВЪ СИЪЪ Ѯ.

MR A. DE VRE

This German convert finds Russian Orthodoxy "the next thing to heaven"

Across the street from Rova Farm stands the Russian Orthodox Information Center. It is managed by a non-Russian convert to Orthodoxy, Alexei De Vre. We interviewed Mr De Vre at the Rova restaurant and the Information Center.

De Vre: We came here from Holland in 1958 with ten children. We went to the Catholic Church. The changes in the church were going so far that we couldn't take it anymore. I had been a choir member in Roman Catholic Churches for seventeen years. I saw the disappearance of many saints and of the traditional liturgy. The last time we went to Catholic Church, they brought an accordion out to the altar. Then I said to my wife, "I can't take it." So knowing Father Konstantin, we came here.

FIP: Where did you know Father Konstantin from?

De Vre: I knew him from here. We had been coming here for seven years, because of the beauty, music, and mystical things in St Vladimir's. Finally we made a big step and joined the Russian Orthodox Church. It was the best thing

that could happen to us.

FIP: Was there any special preparation that you had to go through, like learning a catechism?

De Vre: Learning the catechism—no. My wife and I are both from an extremely strict Roman Catholic family.

It was not simple to cast off a religion of fifty-six years, to forget about it and join another. That is why it took so long to decide. After we decided to change, we were sorry that we didn't do it earlier.

FIP: Do you feel that your conversion brought you any closer to God?

De Vre: Yes—this, in our opinion, is the next thing to heaven. It's the closest we can come. By no means would I say we have anything to do with saintly people. I'm one of the biggest sinners there is. But in this Orthodox Church is the true church. It has never changed and there is so much hope in it. It is not just one-half hour with the people running in and out and saying they have done their duty. It is not so, because we have fasting and all kinds of other things that other churches don't do anymore.

FIP: When you became converted, did you have any reservations about the fact that most of the parishioners were Russian and that this might be more of the expression of Russian culture than a way for you to worship God?

De Vre: No. Father Konstantin took care of that. He explained in very clear words how everything was. The way Orthodoxy was brought to us made us see the completely bad things that we do. We learned of the real way we treat people, of our greediness, and all the faults that we have. We found out about our selfishness—but we try.

FIP: Tell us about Father Konstantin, sir.

De Vre: The people don't realize what kind of a priest we have here. He is a great priest, a great artist, and also the father of a family. What shines most is the faith he has and the love he brings to people. You can be the lowest thing in the world, and he will always find something good.

We knew him as a deacon, and after he became a priest, he helped us through many struggles. Some of the things in the Orthodox Church looked so difficult, like standing for hours, and fasting. He taught us to try. If you try to stand long and get tired, you can sit down and no one will ask any questions.

FIP: Does not being Russian present any problems at all?

De Vre: Of course, my wife and I do not know the Russian language, but Father Konstantin is helping us with that.

FIP: Is the liturgy similar to the Roman Catholic liturgy that you understood in Holland?

De Vre: The Roman Catholic Church took most of the same framework of the liturgy, because this was the way it was done before division came about in the churches. There are things that are now part of the Roman Catholic liturgy, however, that I believe don't belong there at all. As human beings, who are we to change God's law?

FIP: Has your prayer life improved since you have joined the Orthodox Church?

De Vre: I have always said, that if we believe what we claim to believe, we'd have to be right now praying in front of the church on bare knees. But, I'm not there. We hate to sacrifice, and are content to say, "Well, I tried." But do we really try? I don't think so. It's laziness and selfishness. This is where confession comes in. It is a beautiful thing and we have the hope that we will be received in grace the moment we die. That's all we can hope for, because we are just human beings.

FIP: Back to prayer, do you start the day with prayer?

De Vre: Yes—two small pieces from the Bible. Without them, I wouldn't go into my car easily. I wouldn't go to work, because something would be missing. It doesn't have to be an hour long. Just a prayer to ask for the day that is coming, God's blessing.

FIP: Is there a favorite prayer that you use most often? Is there a standard prayer that you use each time you pray?

De Vre: No. Of course, the most important prayer is the Lord's Prayer. And the Jesus Prayer—*"Jesus, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"*—that you say continuously when you are driving, walking, or whatever. Other prayers I use were taught to me by my parents. I often read out loud from the Bible and *My Life in Christ*—a beautiful book by Saint John of Kronstadt. I imagine priests know many more prayers than I, and probably have favorite prayers. For us it is routine. Maybe the routine is good. It reminds us of the existence of God.

FIP: How do you carry your faith into the world?

De Vre: By trying to propagate the faith, to answer all questions truthfully. I also have to admit what a terrible sinner I really am. I try to be a good example. I don't say to a person, "Why don't you become Russian Orthodox?"

FIP: Is love a part of this example you try to get across to people?

De Vre: Yes. We see more of the whole pattern of creation. We know of human selfishness—it is the lack of love. Orthodoxy breaks the pattern of only thinking of our own goals, of thinking of our own gain—never mind the other guy—I want to do what I want to do because I like it.

We try to pay attention to the spiritual side of life and bring that out in other people. We don't do this by saying how holy we are, but by showing others that we are happy.

To praise another and wish him well is not so remarkable, but it has its effects. An elderly man came to me and asked directions for the bus. I gave it to him and said, "Have a good day, and God bless you." He smiled, turned around, and said that no one ever said that to him before.

Little kindly things are very important in this world. I spoke to an alcoholic. I had been drinking for some years, but God saved me from that disaster. If someone were to have heard our conversation, they'd think we were crazy. The man said to me, "This morning I got up, put on a clean shirt, showered, combed my hair, and I even put a clean shirt on. How do you like that?" I said to him, "That is such a great step forward, congratulations!" It was for that man. My congratulations might have helped that man on his way.

FIP: What about the Russian aspects of this community? I notice you have a Tzarist ring. Did you have trouble being accepted by Russian, Russian Orthodox people?

De Vre: It took awhile to be accepted by the Russian community. There are still a few elderly Russians that take the church and the religion as their own, but most have accepted us. It is just one big family. We stay together in church, kiss each other, and love each other.

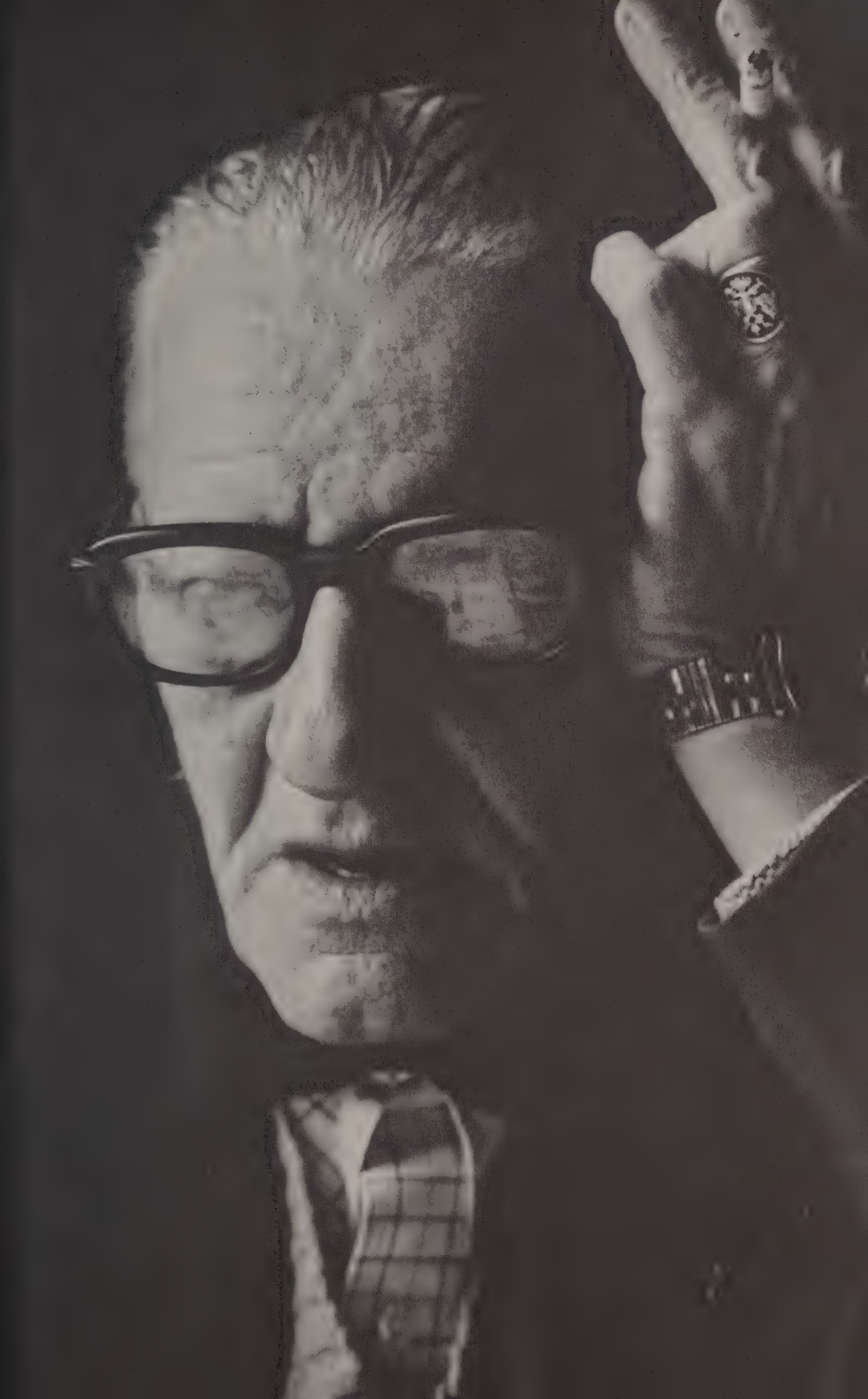
FIP: Do you live in this community?

De Vre: Yes. I live in a house that belongs to Father Konstantin.

FIP: Would you be at home in a Greek Orthodox Church too?

De Vre: Yes, because it's the same faith, and no because I can't get used to the music.

My father was the stage manager in the opera house in Amsterdam. Oh, I love Wagner! They cannot do it here. You know what it is? Lack of discipline. There is no discipline in the States. When an opera is done in Europe, they will simply stop the performance if it's not right. Even if the king is in the hall. The conductor will not have it. So as far as Orthodoxy goes, I love the church, and the religion, and I would go to a Greek Orthodox Church, if that's all there is around, but I love the music in the Russian Church. That's my own personal reason.



PANTELEIMON

"A person's thoughts cannot be changed unless he believes in God"

Panteleimon grew up in Soviet Russia. He was a psychiatrist by profession, and became discouraged with the non-spiritual content of modern psychiatry. He is a part of what Helen Zill refers to as "the third wave" of immigrants. Because Panteleimon feels more at ease speaking Russian, Helen Zill translated for us. The following interview took place in the Rova restaurant.

FIP: Why did you leave the psychiatric profession?

Panteleimon: I felt that in order to get good results in the field of psychiatry, it must be interwoven somehow with religion. Without religion, psychiatry brings more harm than help.

FIP: Why is that so?

Panteleimon: In modern life people are moving away from belief in God and

the church. As they leave the church, they substitute a materialistic life for a spiritual life. Before these trends, when people had a problem with their soul, they would see a priest, and would get help in terms of spiritual answers. When people leave the church and live on a materialistic level they still have the same needs, but they go to a psychiatrist. He can only give an answer on this materialistic level. He goes around the problem, near it, but cannot transcend the materialistic level. A person's thoughts cannot be changed, unless he believes in God.

FIP: Upon arriving at the belief that modern psychiatry is detrimental, what did you do?

Panteleimon: I headed up the automobile transport—a garage in Ocean County, N.J. Before that I worked as a mechanic.

FIP: How did you arrive at a belief in God, being raised in Soviet Russia? Isn't the Soviet Union a totally secular society?

Panteleimon: That isn't quite true. Among the heads of state there is an anti-religious feeling, but among the people religious feeling is very strong. It is ingrained. Another thing is that belief in God is not something that you assume. It's within you and more valuable when you come to it yourself, instead of being trained for it in childhood.

FIP: Why then, when you gave up psychiatry, didn't you go into the priesthood?

Panteleimon: In the Soviet Union it is a great problem to become a priest. For now I leave it in God's hands—if it's His will for me to become a priest, I will become one.

FIP: Do you attend Father Konstantin's church?

Panteleimon: Yes. He is my priest and a good friend.

FIP: Did you tell Father Konstantin your story?

Panteleimon: I don't remember what I told Father Konstantin. I answered everything that he asked me.

FIP: Do you think it's possible that you could become a doctor here, and treat your patients by incorporating your religious ideas in your treatment?

Panteleimon: It is possible for me to become a doctor here. All I would have to do is study English intensively, take the license exam, and so on. It would be a waste of time. I do not wish to practice medicine.

FIP: Do you believe that even pernicious psychosis like schizophrenia can be cured by spiritual means?

Panteleimon: Yes, I am certain, and I am no religious fanatic.

FIP: Is there any place for the use of medicine in the treatment of mental illness?

Panteleimon: Medicine without a doubt can be helpful. I have encountered people in life who have been totally cured just by changing their thoughts—totally cured.

FIP: Do you plan to communicate your views by writing or speaking?

Panteleimon: These are my personal views. I am, however, writing a book about my feelings about the world. It's going to be printed in Russian in Belgium. I am calling the book, I think, *The Beginning of the World.* This pertains to the inscription found on an emerald tablet recovered by archaeologists from the tomb of Alexander of Macedonia.

I am trying to talk to people only on my own level of understanding. I believe that we all came from the same God and follow the paths that we understand. You don't have to hate people because one follows Christ, one the Buddha, and so on. I believe that Orthodoxy is the right path for me.

FIP: Do you see any prospects for the reunion of Christianity? Or do you think there will always be a split between Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism?

Panteleimon: I feel that the union of the churches cannot be done on the basis of anyone's laws, but by the desire of every Christian to unite. Now each church speaks of its own Christ. How many Christs were there in the world? There was only one form of Christianity many years ago. A thousand years ago there was one Orthodoxy.

FIP: Do you think that Christianity will unite under Orthodoxy?

Panteleimon: I don't think that the uniting of Christians will be along the lines of Orthodoxy or of the Roman Catholic Pope. I do believe that some day there will be a brotherhood of Christianity.

FIP: What is the role of Russian Orthodoxy in the reunion of Christianity?

Panteleimon: I can't say for sure. I believe that the Russian race is the carrier of religious life. Three thousand years ago the Hebrew was given the light of religion. Now we are living on the border of great change. I feel it is like the resurrection of Lazarus in the Bible. I am not speaking in the nationalistic

sense, nor am I totally committed to Russian ideas.

FIP: Does this light transcend the differences between Soviet Russians and American Russians?

Panteleimon: They are both Russians, and they both share a common culture. . . . The Soviet political system creates fear in those who live under it. The expression of opinions is very careful and subdued. Whole families are punished for the doings of one family member. There is great fear of retaliation in Soviet Russia. Neither Russians who live in the Soviet Union nor those who migrated to other countries really like the system. Love of country is very strong, though. Our culture pulls us together—the great songs, writings, and the image of the motherland.

What happened in our Revolution, and all true revolutions, is paradoxical. All these people are fighting the evil in the system, but even more so the effect this evil has on them personally. This leads paradoxically to the horrors which occurred in France and Russia—the bloodshed in Russia. Alexander Solzhenitsyn's statistics show that from 1918 to 1956 sixteen million people were wiped out by the Soviets. These Russian deaths can be documented. Solzhenitsyn believes that, combined with the undocumented deaths, the number is closer to 104 million that were killed.

FIP: Could you explain the splits in Russian Orthodoxy?

Panteleimon: In America there are three jurisdictions of the Russian Orthodox Church. The first one is the Tsarist church outside of Russia under the Synod—Saint Vladimir's. The second one is called the Metropolitan, which is under the United States heads of the church. It began 150 years ago. It believes it can reform some of the teachings of the church. That is why it is in existence. The Synod adheres to the classical forms of religion worked out in old Russia. The third is the church run by the Soviet Patriarch.

FIP: Are these churches in communion with each other?

Panteleimon: The Metropolitan and Soviet churches are in communion with each other. The Metropolitan has gotten permission from the Soviet Patriarch to exist as an independent church in America. Neither are in communion with the Synod, because of the governmental—Communist—control in the Soviet church.

FIP: Do all three have communion with Greek Orthodoxy?

Panteleimon: The Synod does not, because the Greek church has relations with the Soviet church, and is against uniting these churches while they have anything to do with Communism.

CAROL DEVECKA

And the voice said, "These are my children, and I want you to take care of them"

Carol Devecka is Jackson Township Director of Youth Recreation. She has been working with Rova Farm and Jackson Township to use the Rova picnic

grounds as a recreation center for township youth, ages two to nineteen. She has become an accepted member of the Rova community. Helen Zill thinks of her as "wonderful" and looks forward to the day when the township youth will share the facilities with the Russian community. Helen said that if Rova had enough income they would let the township use the grounds for free. It would be a way of making another contribution to American society from the Russian American community.

Carol's love of God, children, and the Rova community make her another episode in the history of Rova. This interview took place in the Rova restaurant.

FIP: How did you originally get involved with youth?

Carol: Some time ago I looked into the situation. It seemed that the normal adult world was fighting its own ego trip, with all their sports and community-minded organizations. I would go to these groups and ask questions like, "Well, what are you doing?" They would answer that they were doing this, this, and this, but never in terms of any substantial contribution to society. It always seemed in terms of their own personal ego.

FIP: Were you recreation director then?

Carol: No. At the time I ran ghetto programs, and before that I taught in the prisons. My background goes back twenty-four years. I had all kinds of social involvements, when it wasn't my job to do them. I hurt inside for what I saw. I feel God was priming me for this job since I was fourteen.

I always asked questions, and people always told me I was a trouble-maker. So I came to see that the only way I could be effective would be working with other troublemakers, and those who were already in trouble. So I went to places like Rahway Prison and I said, "I'm here to teach." They would say, "Are you kidding? These guys are murderers and rapists. You can't come here like Snow White and think you're going to accomplish anything." So I said, "Let me try. People die every day on the street. If something is going to happen to me, it's going to happen anyway." I started teaching at Rahway Prison and started sharing *golden rules.* People on the outside didn't want to hear that stuff. The prisoners, who were ostracized from society, were very willing to listen and share.

At the time I wasn't religious. I just believed in the golden rule. I was brought up a strict Catholic and got to the point where I was tired of being told I was no good. I found a lot of things that the prisoners said, and that I said, were very similar. They really weren't bad. If they were, they wouldn't have sat down and shared any part of themselves.

During this period, I went through my own little trauma over trying to fit into society—by trying to be things people thought I should be. "I should become a dancer, a singer, a model, and so on," I would tell myself. I came close to dying in an automobile accident, hemorrhaging and all that. One day I

decided to become a nurse—a physical therapist. I felt I owed something back to society. I saw pain and sickness. For five years I was sick myself.

FIP: Was your sickness a result of the car accident?

Carol: I had a number of permeated discs that were aggravated by working as a physical therapist which involves lifting patients, and so on. Through different traumas and loss of blood, my body became very weak. I got to the point where my body skeleton and bone structure weren't holding me up. The muscles on one side of my body were holding up what was left of me. I went down to only 106 pounds. My body was producing tumors all over. My breasts had tumors. I had three operations in ten days and stayed in the hospital three months.

FIP: You must have made a miraculous recovery.

Carol: Like I said, I wasn't religious. One day, this nice Jewish woman called and asked me to come to church and get faithful. My husband offered to take me, but I refused. I told him, "I'll go myself." He didn't believe in God, and I felt that he would make fun of these people. Anyway, I went to the church and the people prayed over me. There were no immediate results, except for a warm feeling that came over me.

FIP: Was that this church—Saint Vladimir's?

Carol: No. But it's all the same. Christianity is not the architect of the building. We're the church. It's not what's inside the building.

About three or four days after I was prayed over, I got up in the morning and started scrubbing the entire house. My tiles and everything, and by eleven o'clock in the morning I was downstairs in my kitchen scrubbing the floor with muck and mire running down my arms, and I was laughing. I suddenly realized that I wasn't in pain anymore, and I didn't know who to call or tell. So I called a twenty-three-year-old former patient of mine who had had polio since she was six. I told her about it, and she said, "I don't know if I can handle being well, after being sick since the age of six." She came with me the next night and was prayed over. She no longer wears leg braces.

I showed up at my doctor's office, wearing high heels and a dress I hadn't worn in years. I walked around like Loretta Young and the doctor started to cry. I also cried. This was the doctor who took care of me seven days a week. I was so bad that I would have to sleep at the doctor's house while he did therapy. I was too sick to go home. I know that prayer really works.

Around this time my father died in a car accident. I drove my mother's car to the garage to get it repaired. When I got to the garage, it was pouring rain. I was not dressed for the rain. I asked the mechanic how long the car would take to be repaired. He said it would take five and a half hours. I thought I would sit there reading, but I heard a voice saying, "Or you can walk home praising me all the way." I never heard a voice like that before, so I walked home in the

rain—twelve and a half miles. My shoes fell apart. My feet were swollen, but I felt fantastic.

While walking, I came to Lakewood—to the ghetto, which was a section I normally drove through with my windows up. I was going to walk around it, but the voice prodded me to walk on.

It was eight-thirty in the morning, and I saw children shooting drugs in hallways, drinking, and one of the kids was drinking under a parked car. I said out loud, "God, why does this happen?" And the voice said, "These are my children and I want you to take care of them." I answered, "Yes, these are your children."

Anyway, a few days later I was asked to teach a retarded group of kids at the YMCA. When I first went there, the building was closed to the kids on the street. The kids were hanging on the corners, and the counselors, who were paid very well, locked the doors and just collected their salary. So, on God's guts, I walked in and said I was going to have the books audited, and suggested that the director of their program either resign or change. He resigned.

Anyway, I got more involved with the street kids. We started by talking and doing creative things together. I even brought some of them to help me work with prisoners and youth in the detention homes. I would try to reach the children with beauty, and bring out their creative side, no matter what it consisted of. I wouldn't put up with fresh stuff or foul language, and for the most part, I didn't get it. I worked for three and a half years in the streets without pay, and found myself developing reverse prejudice. Suddenly I felt the ghetto kids were the good kids, and the Jackson kids were the bad ones. They were all angels, though, and all it took was letting them know they were loved.

I haven't lost a kid yet. I got over my reverse prejudice. I got the job I have now with Jackson County. I deal with them all the same way. I let them know that they're not garbage, and that God loves them. We have a grand time, singing, dancing, floral design, and the arts.

FIP: What are your plans for Rova?

Carol: I can see this picnic grounds as a youth recreation center, handling people from ages two to nineteen years old. The facilities are perfect. The kids in this town have gotten a ripoff. They are promised parks, and this and that, and have gotten nothing.

FIP: Has this plan been approved by the township?

Carol: It's been approved, but they haven't signed it yet.

FIP: What are your feelings toward the Rova Community?

Carol: I used to think that a bunch of pompous professionals ran this place. After I met Helen, I felt differently, and sorry for my previous bad thoughts about this place. I love the people here, and I feel like I belong here.

FR KONSTANTIN

The archpriest of Saint Vladimir's—a 41-year-old Pole who paints icons—stands firm in the middle of Rova Farm's many sufferings and happinesses

Helen Zill arranged for us to talk with Father Konstantin at lunch. We sat across the table from him in the excellent Rova Farm restaurant, enjoying the vegetable-thick borscht and stuffed cabbage while he gravely and scrupulously responded to our request that he tell us about himself. His pale violet cassock, black velvet cap, and beard that hasn't been cut since he was ordained (the standard practice of Russian Orthodox priests), gave him a story-book appearance which was instantly belied by his forceful, intelligent, courteous but strict voice, his wholly serious gaze, his personal kindness and sensitivity. It was clear that he feels deeply the never-ending and complicated duties of his position as archpriest of Saint Vladimir's church in the heart of the community. When lunch was over, we noticed he had not touched the herring he had ordered. He explained to us that he did not feel physical hunger whenever he was concentrating on his church and his Lord and Savior.

FK: I was born in Poland to Russian parents. I was born in 1939, and when the Communists came into Poland, my parents fled to Germany and we stayed in Germany until 1951. In 1951 we came to the States. I went to an art school and then into the American army for three years and after the army I got married and was called by the church. I had wanted to become a priest or deacon since I was about twelve years old. But, about four years previous, when I applied for it, His Grace the Archbishop cancelled the examination I was supposed to take and told me he was not going to ordain me. When Father Peter Popoff here

asked me, after my discharge, if I wanted to be a deacon, I said sure, I'd love to. He said, "Well, I'll talk to the Archbishop," and two weeks later I was called in without any examination and was ordained a deacon. I always wanted to find out why His Grace had refused to do it before. He told me afterwards it had been "for your humility. It's good for you," he said. "We wanted to make sure you wanted to go into the field of the priesthood to serve the Lord and the people instead of your own will." So that was very well done, and I was glad it happened that way.

You're supposed to serve two years as a deacon, but under the circumstances here it was only a year later that I was ordained as a priest. And I have been here as pastor and priest for ten years now. I was happy to become a priest because the real life is only spiritual. Everything else doesn't really matter that much. For instance, I'd been an illustrator of books and magazines, but I couldn't find any satisfaction in it because there was always a lot of trickery involved in it. You have a product, you have to illustrate it, and you have to make it look better than it actually does. It went against my grain. Little by little, I started to switch to the painting of icons and other religious paintings and, when I became a priest, I was very glad that finally I was able to work entirely in iconography.

FIP: Tell us about icons.

FK: The first icon that was made was meant to be a portrait of our Lord Jesus Christ. The artist just couldn't get it down on canvas. He asked for a basin of water and a girl brought it and then he took a towel and put it against his face—and there, on the towel, was the face of the Lord—the first icon. The prince who had commissioned the portrait happened, it seems, to have leprosy, and when the towel with the face of the Lord was brought to him, he was cured by it although he still had spots on his body. I am not sure if it was Saint Thomas or Saint Luke, but one of them came and baptized the prince and then the spots were removed also. . . . The Orthodox Church had the icon in its possession until the tenth century. Then it was transported from Constantinople and disappeared. There were many copies made from that icon. That's how iconography got started.

FIP: Is the Russian Orthodox Church in some way affiliated with the Greek Orthodox Church?

FK: The Greek Orthodox Church was our mother church.

FIP: One of your traditions, is it not, is to use the old Russian calendar instead of the modern one?

FK: Yes, we have a kind of double calendar now, one in line both with the old numbers and the new. We can see that the seasons prefer to go along with the old one. I suspect that if the new one goes on long enough, Christmas will be

celebrated during the summer.

We adhere to tradition as it was handed down by the Apostles themselves and by the ecumenical councils that came later. We don't believe in modernizing. The services were established in the first century and by the sixth all elaborated in full color as we have them now—the reading of the hours, the vespers, matins, and so forth.

In these services we are living all the events that took place in the life of our Lord and also of the prophets of the old church. Our church is actually a continuation of the Old Testament Church. We haven't severed ourselves.

I think that anybody who is willing to follow Christ, to accept that Christ is the Son of God, will have a completely different relationship with other human beings, with the whole world, with the whole situation within himself. If we accept Christ as the Son of God, we accept His authority over us. If we accept His authority over us, we are bound to be in submission of our own will to the will of the church which He built. There's a chain of command in all of life, in nature, in everything. It is the same in a church as in a life. The Lord said, if they do not listen to you, they do not listen to me, if they listen to you, they listen to me. If we don't want to listen to the Apostles' rules, what they have said for us to do, we are denying our allegiance to Christ. As the centuries went on, those who discarded the rules separated themselves from the body of our Lord. They are no longer followers of Christ. They may say they are, but they're not unless they go back again to the basics in the beginnings of the teachings of the church.

FIP: Do you see that happening in any churches other than the Orthodox Church?

FK: I see a lot of searching going on in the whole world. I see probably millions of people quite sincerely looking for that truth and struggling and wanting to find it. I also see that any real attempts on their part would eventually bring them to the Orthodox Church, because they'll find that the Orthodox Church is the keeper of the Lord's truth. The Orthodox Church is not wavering and changing things right and left. They are holding fast to the traditions of the Apostles and the teachings of the holy authorities.

FIP: Now, just as an example, say someone is a Protestant and his father told him to remain a Protestant, yet he has found the Orthodox Church. Wouldn't he be rebelling against his father if he joined the Orthodox Church?

FK: When there comes a conflict between the authority of the father and the authority of the church, we always have to choose the church. Because the authority of the church is directed from the Lord. If obedience to the father was more important than obedience to follow Christ, there would be no Christians. In early times, many pagans were converted and their parents were against it, but they still converted and went to martyrdom. When the ordinance of man or the law goes in contradiction of God, then we have to choose the law of God.

FIP: What do you think about Pope John Paul II's wanting to get to know the Russian Orthodox religion at Easter and the ecumenical meetings that are taking place nowadays?

FK: I have never seen the Pope of Rome—whether the last one or the one before or many of them before—make a real effort to submit his will to the will of the church. He always talks from a pedestal. As long as he is in that deep heresy, he cannot see the truth, so his attempts to negotiate with the Orthodox Church about union are all for nothing. We have an ecumenical pope in Alexandria, a pope in Jerusalem, and a pope in Moscow—the Patriarch—who is working directly for the Communist government. The Communists have never changed their belief that religion is the opium of the people. They're still putting people of real faith into nut-houses. According to them, you've got to be crazy to live for others instead of yourself, to sacrifice your own food so that someone else can be fed. It's just not conceivable to them. It doesn't make sense. That's the way the world has and always will be treating Christians.

If you can take the truth, I tell you the truth. It's up to you. You accept it or not.

I can see there's preparation for the anti-Christ overtake of the whole world—namely, the unification of all the churches. If it comes through the real search for the truth, it would make sense. But to unify it in the way they are, by complete modernization, bringing in jazz music or some kind of rock-and-roll and stuff like that—I can't buy that.

I wanted to make this statement before. I make it now. The Lord has always shown authority over the whole universe that He made. It was registered in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, people were not allowed to stray from the teachings. The same thing goes now. The Lord cannot be permissive and allow thousands of churches to spring up and use His name.

All these different denominations and religions are bringing nothing but confusion to people really trying to find the truth.

FIP: What about someone who lives in a place where there is no Orthodox Church? What about members of other faiths? They're not exposed to God?

FK: No, but I am sure the Lord will treat them and measure them according to their lives. He is not going to hold it against them that they have not become members of His church if they were never exposed to it. People like you have not been exposed to it. You have to study. You have to find out whether what I've said is the truth and the final truth.

FIP: These are strict words, but you personally strike us as being very easygoing and tolerant.

FK: Don't talk to my wife, then. *(Laughs.)* It comes down really to what is

inside our hearts. If we are sincere in what we believe in—well, you know, sometimes late at night I get worried when I remember the Lord saying that if you love your mother or father or son or daughter more than you love me, you are unworthy of me.

The Gospels are really extreme. How about all the blood shed? What about the statement of Saint Stephen when he was stoned to death?

What really makes me worry is my lack of that extremeness. What makes me worry is that I am speaking of these things, but I'm filled with iniquity and not fulfilling those things the way I should be.

If I go to confession and confess my sins and if I really have repentance, the Lord will forgive me. That's for sure.

The Apostles say in the Scriptures to confess your sins to each other. They were given the directive by the Lord—whatever you forgive is going to be forgiven. Whatever you release here on earth is going to be released in heaven. Whatever you bind here on earth is going to be bound in heaven. The Apostles were hearing confessions from the beginning. People were receiving communion on a daily basis when it was physically possible. When it wasn't, they received it at least once a week, from the first century on.

What happens today—that is a different story. Today a person comes to confession and you thank the Lord that at least he has come. As far as giving him a penance according to the strictness of the church, most of the time I put these things on my own neck because that's what it is with a priest. The priest has to take upon himself the sins just as the Lord had to take upon himself the sins of all mankind. Ecumenical law states that for the sin of fornication or adultery, there would be a penance of twenty years without communion. The world today would be shocked even to hear that. If I give a person a penance like that today, he'll say, "Goodbye, I'll never see you again." Instead, I give him a penance of reading the Gospel, which he should be doing, anyway. Since I have released him of sin without the blessing of the church, I have to carry the punishment for that myself.

FIP: How do you stand it, truthfully?

FK: That's why I am sick very often. I've got angina. There are times when I feel so much of the heaviness of the burden that I run to confession myself. Without running to the Lord all the time you can't survive.

FIP: How does the Orthodox Church carry on its missionary activity?

FK: The Orthodox Church—especially the Russian—is not missionary-minded at all. We sent some missionaries to Alaska before the Revolution, but otherwise very little missionary work has been done. I think that's one of the reasons why the Lord has allowed the Communists to take over and force millions of people to flee throughout the world. As a result of this, a lot of churches have sprung up around the world—at least 500 of them—which are exposing people like yourself to the Orthodox faith.

FIP: How does reverence for the Tsar fit into the Orthodox religion?

FK: He is a father-figure here on earth for the Russian people. Reverence for the Tsar stems from the same basic understanding of God being the father of everybody. . . . Myself, I think he was a great martyr. He endured as much suffering, more probably, than other Christians when they were quartered and cut to pieces. I'll give you an example. Are you married? Do you have children? If you have children, and you see your children fighting amongst each other, what happens to your heart? It bothers you very much. Now, as a priest, I have many people who say they go to church and I see them fighting amongst each other. I see them being devoured by spiritual wolves—by their brothers and what have you. My heart can suffer very much, but the more I love them, the more my heart is going to suffer. The more you love your children, the more you see that they are straying away from God, from decency, and so, the more it tears you apart inside. If I, as a priest, can suffer so much when I see such troubles—

FIP: You don't have children of your own?

FK: I do—three of them. But I really feel that everyone's mine. If I go through a tremendous amount of suffering on account of their troubles, how much more did Nicholas II suffer when he saw the Revolution take over and then the fighting, the murders, the springing up of concentration camps, and so on—the whole thing, the whole picture? I know from reading his life that Nicholas was a very humble man. He gave always to the poor and to the building of hospitals and churches. In the States, we have many churches built by his fund. What suffering he must have gone through to see the persecution of the church started and the torture of thousands and thousands of priests and the closing up of the churches.

FIP: We wanted to ask about Orthodox prayer.

FK: You can ward off attacks with a prayer, any prayer. Calling on the name of Jesus, this is recognizing that you are quite worthless and are condemned and should be punished. All you can ask for is mercy. The Lord says the contrite and humble heart He will not despise. This is the opposite of pride, of what the devil wants us to feel. Whatever the prayer, it has to go into the heart. If we think of every word we are saying and it doesn't reach the heart, it doesn't do any good, because the Lord wants us to pray in spirit and we can reach the spirit only through the heart. You can say the Lord's Prayer from morning till night and unless you put your heart into it, it doesn't mean anything.

Luckily, the Lord does not measure everybody according to the books. Sins are not measured the same among everybody. The Lord is very particular about what circumstances sins are committed in, and what may be to me a grave sin and lead to my damnation, may not be such a bad one to you. White lies, for instance. To teach your children to say on the phone that you're not in

when you are is teaching them to lie. People think it's not a big lie. But a lie is a lie. If I, as a priest, would allow my children to use white lies, it could be enough to bring about the damnation of my soul, as bad as someone else robbing or molesting someone. The Lord says to us that we have to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. I will never reach the perfectness. The higher you go spiritually, the more you recognize your imperfectness and the more you have a chance to find the humility. Only then are you in a position to help other people, although the real help people get is not from any priest or preacher or clergy but from the Lord Himself. Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who can really help.

It's up to the individual. Achieving grace depends on the amount of effort a person puts into it. If a person puts a lot of effort into prayer, the Lord will have mercy on him eventually and send him the grace. You never earn it because no one can earn the mercy of the Lord.

Because of our nature, I think, we are inclined to sin. Apparently we have to fall quite deep before we recognize that we are sinning, and that is a big problem. We can't rely on ourselves and our own wisdom. That's why we need the Gospel, why we need to study the Gospel, why we need to attend services. I have said many times to my people that if only they'll fulfill everything the church requires of them, they'll become saints and recognize that they are the worst sinners of all.

In the artistic field, if you take up painting and work on it in a dim light, you think you have accomplished something very nice. But the minute you expose it to a bigger and brighter light, you see the many imperfections that are there. If you expose it to the sunlight, you may be shocked to see how imperfect the painting is. It is the same with life. If we walk in darkness, our deeds and actions may all seem to be pretty good. But when we expose our lives and start walking in the light of our Lord, we start to see how we should live. To give you an example, the Lord says that a man commits adultery if he only looks at a woman with desire. He has committed it in his heart and so he has committed adultery. The Lord is looking for perfection in us.

FIP: In other words, some kind of initiation has to be made for the grace of God?

FK: The effort has to be put in. The Lord says, without me, you can do nothing, yet he says to get into the kingdom of heaven you have to exert yourself. It is the effort that is counted because the deeds will be fulfilled only with God's grace. The Lord does not restrict our life. He lets us go. We can do anything we want to do—it's our choice. If we choose to follow the Lord's road, we have to adhere strictly to His commandments, but we do so only of our own free will. Take away the free will, and we'll never learn to love. I have never seen anyone love if it's forced. Love cannot be forced. It has to be voluntary. That's the only thing we can offer really—our will, our effort to want to love the Lord and follow Him. He'll take care of the rest. . . . If somebody has the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit without any question will bring him to the truth because the Holy Spirit will not abide in anybody who will not accept the truth.

WHAT IS THE ORTHODOX

YOU have just visited an Orthodox Church, and there is much strange and different from other churches you may have attended. It is more than the language and service which may puzzle you, for the latter could be in any one of several languages, English included. What is this Church?

Close to two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth and founded the Church through His Apostles and disciples for the salvation of men. The teachings of the Apostles and the Church spread far in the years which followed. Many churches were founded, but all were united in faith, worship, and the partaking of the Sacraments.

To the groups of churches founded by the Apostles themselves belong the five Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch,Jerusalem, and Rome. The Church of Constantinople was founded by St Andrew, the Church of Alexandria by St Mark, the Church of Antioch by St Paul, the Church of Jerusalem by St Peter and St James, and the Church of Rome by St Peter and St Paul. Those founded in later years through the missionary activity of the first churches were the Churches of Sinai, Russia, Greece, Yugoslavia, Roumania, and many more.

All of these churches are independent in their administration, yet they were in full communion with one another with the exception of the Church of Rome, which separated in the year 1054. In faith, doctrine, Apostolic tradition, sacraments, liturgies, and services they are exactly alike. Regardless of the language of each, they exist in fellowship, and together constitute and call themselves the Orthodox Church.

The teachings of the Church are derived from two sources: Holy Scriptures and Sacred Tradition, which complement each other. As written in the Gospel of St John: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world could not contain the books that should be written." These unwritten teachings were transmitted orally by the Apostles and come down to us in Sacred Tradition.

The faith and doctrines of the Church can be found in the Scriptures, the writings of the church fathers, and in the canons and decrees of the seven ecumenical councils. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly God, the Saviour, and the Son begotten of the same substance of the Father before all ages. He is also truly man, like us in all respects except sin. We believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, this being confirmed by the Second Ecumenical

CHURCH?

Council in the words used in the Symbol of Faith, "And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father. . . ."

The Orthodox worship God in trinity, and honor and venerate the saints and ask their intercession before God. Of the saints, the Mother of God holds a special place because of the supreme grace and call she received from God. According to the canons of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, we venerate the sacred icons and relics not in themselves, but as representations of God and the saints.

We recognize seven Sacraments: Baptism, Chrismation (Confirmation), Holy Eucharist, Confession, Ordination, Marriage, and Holy Unction. Baptism and Chrismation are the means of entrance for the Christian into the Church. For without dying to the old man and putting on the new in Baptism, we cannot receive the inheritance of the Kingdom which Christ restored to us. With Chrismation, we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit of God in the form of a dove alighted on Christ, we receive Him in the Holy Chrism, becoming partakers of the fullness of Christ. In the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, we partake of the true Body and Blood of Christ, in the form of bread and wine, for the remission of sins and for life eternal. As it is written, "Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you." In confession, Christ gives us, through the confessor, the forgiveness of the sins we commit after Baptism if we truly repent of them. The foregoing three Sacraments are essential for the life of all Christians.

By the laying-on of hands of a canonical bishop, divine grace descends on him who is being ordained. This basic Sacrament has provided uninterrupted succession to the Orthodox clergy from the Holy Apostles and the establishment of the Church on the Day of Pentecost. Divine grace sanctifies the union of two people in matrimony, as Christ blessed the wedding at Cana by His presence and the performance of His first open miracle. Infirmities of the body and soul are healed through the Sacrament of Holy Unction.

These, briefly, are some of the characteristics of the Orthodox Church. The Church is *one* because our Lord Jesus Christ founded only one church. It is *holy* through the sanctification of its Founder and Head, Jesus Christ, and the operation of the Holy Spirit. It is *catholic* because it is universal, and knows no limitations of place or time. It is *apostolic* because it was founded by the Holy Apostles. This is the Orthodox Church—the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

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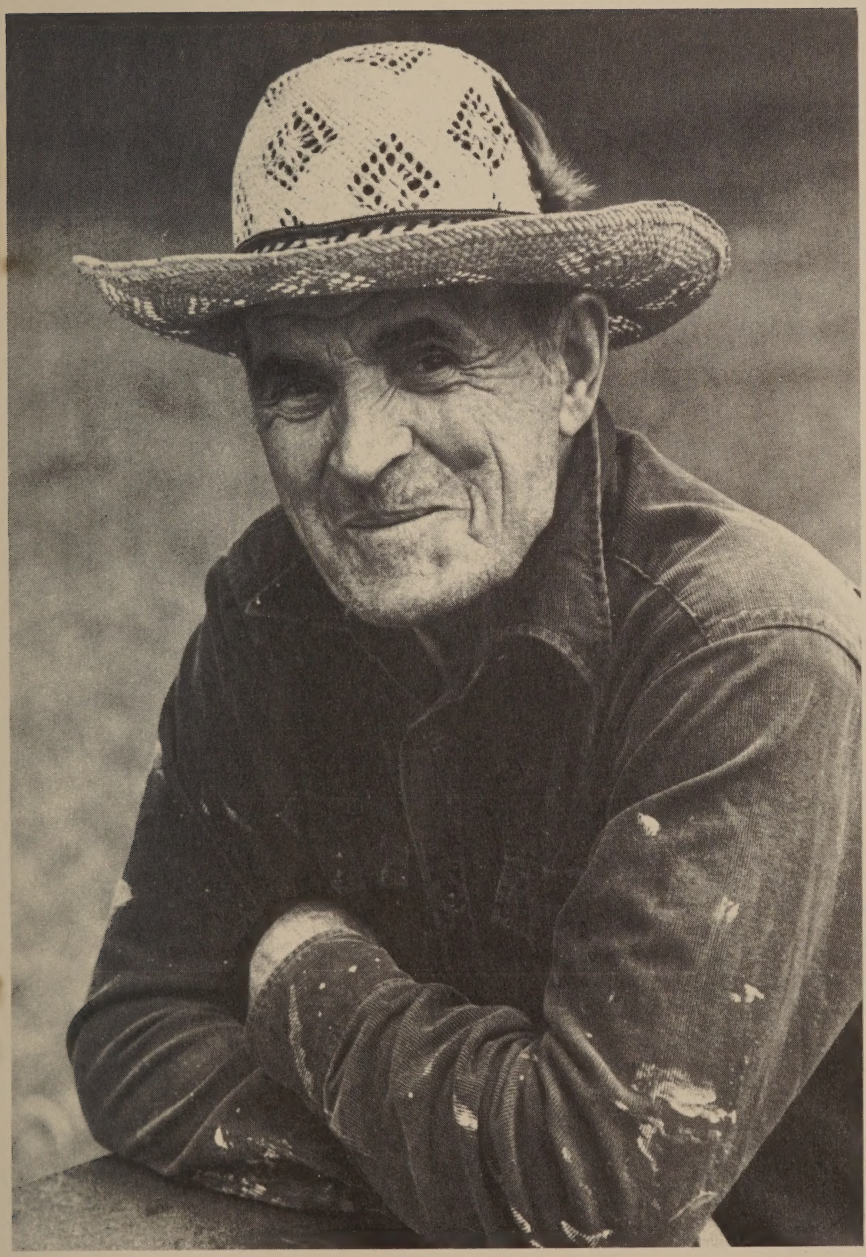

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REPORT ON ROVA FARM is a special issue of Fellowship in Prayer's monthly publication. For further information and subscription rates, write to the address below or phone (609) 924-0880.

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